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# Fairfax Skindeep Tattoo Removal Pilot Program

<http://www.co.fairfax.va.us/services/skindeep/homepage.htm>



*FINAL REPORT*

**“An Innovative Public Interagency/Private Sector Partnership  
Serving the Youth of Fairfax County, Virginia”**

*(reproduce locally)*

November 11, 1998

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# SUMMARY

This report presents the findings of the pilot evaluation of the Fairfax Skindeep Tattoo Removal Program currently managed by the Skindeep Inter-Agency Committee under the auspices of the Human Services Leadership Team, Fairfax County, Virginia. The pilot evaluation is intended to address progress in the implementation and effectiveness of the Fairfax Skindeep Tattoo Removal Program services and activities. The pilot project involved: 1) Feasibility demonstration of limited duration, 2) Base-line data collection and evaluation, and 3) Pilot Project report completion. The report incorporates findings of the pilot project, including recommendations for future data collection and recommended program revisions. This pilot project feasibility demonstration was designed to study tattoo removal activities, public-private human services relationships, and on-going program evaluation and data collection. The pilot study identifies methodology that should be effectively utilized for future clinic growth.

The pilot study is divided into seven sections. Section I. provides a historical account of the project inception. Section II. discusses program design and methodology. Section III. addresses participant reaction. Section IV. examines administration relationships. Section V. reviews program outcomes. Section VI. describes characteristics of program participants. Section VII. presents conclusions and proposes recommendations. Research for this project included examination of successful (and unsuccessful) existing programs in Phoenix (AZ), Palm Beach (FL), San Antonio (TX), Santa Barbara (CA), Oakland (CA), and Los Angeles (CA). The Skindeep program model from the American Association of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons (ASPRS) was carefully reviewed. Several commercial businesses were also evaluated. Questions for the pilot project were addressed through process and outcome evaluations at tattoo removal clinics and Inter-Agency Committee meetings. Data collection was carried out for a six (6) month period. Interviews were arranged with Clinic staff, physicians, patients, parents/guardians and case managers. Discussions included individual motivation, community impact, inter-disciplinary relationships, alternate funding sources, and barriers to expanded service. Baseline data collection and follow-up assessments of patients have been utilized; ongoing participation, successful and unsuccessful patients.

Respectfully Submitted,

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# I. HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

The inception of the Fairfax Skindeep tattoo removal program coincided with the emergence of the youth gang phenomena in the early to mid-1990's. Human services case managers working in the Mason District area of Fairfax County began utilizing the Culmore Family Resource Center to develop a proactive response to community issues. Early in 1995, a friendly, periodic discussion between human service colleagues developed to address the question: What can we do together to facilitate positive social change in the Culmore area? Informal case manager brown bag lunches at Culmore Family Resource Center began in 1996; Paul Alexander, Police; Sherri McManis, DFS; Chris Volz, ADS; Jerry Jackson, JDR Court; and Cristina Lamar, CBO. Human service agencies providing service at the Culmore Family Resource Center were queried as to their interest. Participants knew each other from other multi-agency projects (such as Family Assessment and Planning Teams and school-based Multi-Discipline Teams). Respectful professional and positive personal relationships aided early foundation for establishment of an effective team. Adaptability to agency manager concerns required patient, non-confrontive planning. Communication with individual agencies, understanding of various roles, services, and concepts of social intervention impacted discussions. An emerging consensus developed on identification of a *vehicle for social change*, not simply another program. Tattoo removal caught the imagination and allowed brainstorming as to implications on client services (What would be the impact of this program on the lives of clients?).

Formal inter-agency committee meetings began in 1997 with the approval of agency managers. Early meetings were characterized by close attention to documentation, accountability, mutual respect, and flexibility. A literature search into theory and existing programs assisted in understanding the scope of varying program philosophies. Important to the ultimate success of program design was the understanding of failure in other jurisdictions. The committee was persistent when faced with planning obstacles. A desired to achieve excellence in all program areas motivated attention to details. A willingness to give others credit has continued. Unity of vision was fundamentally causal for success. The ultimate result was the initial Skindeep Tattoo Removal Clinic on May 11, 1998.

# II. PROGRAM DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Integrated delivery of public and private human services was developed as structural framework. The Inter-agency Committee would provide program administration. The only requirement of participating physicians was to attend the clinic and remove tattoos. Case managers, whether on the Interagency Committee of sponsoring a client, participate as experts in their respective discipline. Best practices and quality delivery of services continue to be hallmarks for program focus. Clearly defined purpose, goals, and objectives were extensively discussed. Leadership development as an Inter-Agency Committee continues to be emphasized. The characteristics of leadership include:

- Communicating
- Knowing and Using the Resources of the Group
- Representing the Group
- Understanding the Needs and Characteristics of the Group
- Effective Teaching
- Planning
- Evaluating
- Controlling the Group
- Sharing Leadership
- Counseling
- Setting the Example

### **III. ADMINISTRATIVE RELATIONSHIPS**

Participating Fairfax County Human Services Agencies included the Fairfax County Police, Department of Family Services, Community Services Board (Alcohol and Drug Services), Health Department, Fairfax County Public Schools, and Juvenile Court (Probation). The Inter-Agency Committee is committed to expansion both with Community Based Organizations (such as faith community) and inclusion of Fairfax County human services divisions (such as Foster Care and Mental Health). The American Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons has been instrumental in implementation of the Skindeep Tattoo Removal Program. Dr. Roberta Gartside continues to be the key medical resource enabling program operation. The Fairfax Medical Society has recently agreed to administer physician scheduling. Community human services agencies; CBO's (e.g.: Alternative House); INOVA, Fairfax Medical Society, and the Culmore Community Action Committee (CCAC) are integral to program functioning. Noteworthy is the recently negotiated participation of INOVA to provide the Woodburn Surgical Center as the site for the second Skindeep Clinic.

Innovative resource and funding; service-in-kind, donations, reduce rate, and grants are a deliberate effort to minimize reliance on public resources. The Fairfax Health Department has provided medical supplies for each clinic patient and the initial clinic facility. The Fairfax County Police have provided funds for a recognition plaque, specialized photographic equipment, and film. Alcohol and Drug Services has provided a meeting location for the Inter-Agency Committee. These agency donations have enabled program implementation. The Medical Alliance, Inc. provided both laser equipment and technician at no cost for the first four clinics and at substantially reduced rates for future operations. Mobile Corporation and Citibank have expressed interest in providing funds to sustain and expand program operation. Commonwealth of Virginia Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ), Department of Health (VA), and Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP) Department of Justice, have tentatively agreed to provide significant funding to sustain and replicate the Skindeep Program. American Management Systems is providing free printing services. Zeta Tau Alpha Women's Fraternity (ZTA) provides free food for clinic patients and participating physicians.

### **IV. PROGRAM SUMMARY**

- Provided 5 Tattoo Clinics at 6 week intervals: served 23 youths from 6 referral sources (JDR CT, DFS, ADS/CSB, CBO, Police, and FCPS)
- Maintained Patient Wait List of 21 youths from 9 referral sources (JDR CT, DFS, ADS, Police, CBO, Housing, Citizen, FCPS, and CSB)
- Completed 500+ hours of community service
- Received donated medical supplies valued at \$60.00 per patient/clinic and free use of laser equipment and technician valued at \$2777.00 per clinic (reduced rate after 10/26/98)
- Recruited 10 Volunteer Physicians from the American Society of Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeons; services in-kind valued at \$300.00 per patient/clinic
- Established administrative physician supervision by the Fairfax Medical Society; services in-kind valued at \$1,700 (1988-1999)
- Estimated services in-kind: \$100,000.00 (11/11/98)
- Operated 1<sup>st</sup> Skindeep Clinic at Fairfax Health Department, Seven Corners commencing 05/11/98

- Collaborated with INOVA for 2<sup>nd</sup> Skindeep Tattoo Removal Clinic at Woodburn Surgical Center commencing 03/08/99
- Utilized clinic opportunity to refer patients to Health Department, DFS/Manpower, FCPS, and CSB
- Safe, secure clinic sites
- Positive media and community response
- Replication of program investigated by Metropolitan Washington Area Council of Governments, State and Federal governments
- Created program handbook
- Submitted pilot report
- Constructed web site within Fairfax County Home Page  
<http://www.co.fairfax.va.us/services/skindeep/homepage.htm>
- Negotiated Juvenile Court approval for all court supervised youths to access the Work Training Program (WTP-T)
- Collaborated with the Fairfax County Police to establish Graffiti Abatement Program
- Arranged translation of key program documents into Spanish, Vietnamese, and Khumer for placement on the web site (Korean pending)
- Recipient: 1998 Team Excellence Award, Fairfax County Government

## **V. CHARACTERISTICS OF PROGRAM PARTICIPANTS**

- 16 active youths; 10 male and 6 female
- 13 juveniles and 3 adults; age range: 14-22
- 8 Asian, 6 Hispanic, and 2 Caucasian
- 7 residing in or recently completed residential treatment programs
- Most Laser treatments: 5; Least laser treatments: 1
- 2 completed tattoo removal
- 7 Drop outs *after* attending at least 1 clinic; Adult Detention Center – 1; Against Medical Advice – 1; Absent Without Leave – 2; Department of Juvenile Justice – 2; Did Not Attend Clinics (3 consecutive) – 1
- All 7 males; 4 Caucasian, 1 Hispanic, and 2 Asian
- 2 Drop outs *prior* to attending at least 1 clinic, both Asian gang related behavior

## VI. PARTICIPANT REACTION

- Powerful , luminous emotional reactions of uncertainty and fear; hopeful new beginnings; confidence and pride; security and achievement
- Improved self-esteem reports
- Family reconciliation
- High level of continuing program attendance
- Establishment of personal relationships with Clinic and Committee staff
- Word of mouth referrals to friends and family
- Compliance with and accountability for program behavioral goals; positive peers, law abiding, education, employment, drug free, and participating in community service
- Focus for case manager treatment plans to achieve tangible success

## VII. CONCLUSIONS

The Fairfax Skindeep Tattoo Removal Program has successfully demonstrated program feasibility. The pilot project:

- 1) Validated the concept of innovative public and private human services collaborative relationships and established a new way of doing business at minimal taxpayer cost
- 2) Established a *functioning* inter-agency committee
- 3) Required creative, accountable, and quality case management relevant to positive alternatives to gang association with outcome focused results
- 4) Identified optimal target population most likely to complete the program:
  - Gang-free youths age 16-22
  - Drug free for at least 6 months
  - Employed
  - Lawful behavior
  - Closely supervised or sponsored by a motivated citizen
  - Attending school (or equivalent)
  - And/or employed

The entire planning and implementation phase has been accomplished without significant public financial commitment. Sustained self-funding is possible through innovative sources such as Medical Alliance Inc., Citibank, Fairfax Medical Society, Mobile Corporation, INOVA, and State and Federal agencies including OJJDP, Department of Juvenile Justice, and Virginia Health Department.

The Fairfax Skindeep Tattoo Removal Program is strength-based intervention harnessing the power of hope. The Inter-Agency Committee initially underestimated the positive impact of the program. The incentive of rewarded has encouraged positive client change toward high personal aspirations and the creation of tax-paying citizens. Skindeep is about redemption of the individual in the face of overwhelming odds.

The following recommendations are made for the Human Services Leadership Team to consider as the next steps in further implementation of the Fairfax Skindeep Tattoo Removal Program:

- *Approval for program continuation and planned growth; 3<sup>rd</sup> clinic in the Fall 1999 and 4<sup>th</sup> clinic Spring 2000 (Reston-Herndon and/or Route 1 corridor)*

The wait list continues to grow with little advertisement. The underlying social phenomena of gang association is expanding the potential client pool. Youths are self-referring by word of mouth. Areas of high gang activity need to be served. Physicians continue to support program expansion. The Inter-Agency Committee feels empowered to proactively focus human services. Numerous requests from neighboring jurisdictions for program inclusion have been received. The Metropolitan Washington D.C. Area Council of Governments and Department of Juvenile Justice (VA) have expressed interest in program replication. The Inter-Agency Committee suggests that **services should not be expended beyond Fairfax County**. The Skindeep Program should exist as a paradigm and program resource rather than an ever expanding regional service.

- *Support participation of Inter-Agency Committee members in collaborative relationships with public and private human service agencies*

Committee members continue to donate their own time and resources to this effort. Regular (paid) human services continue to be delivered by committee members. Interest from public and private human service agencies continues to grow. The need for an expanded committee is evident. Interesting and unexpected collaborative opportunities have developed. These new relationships appear to have potential for human service relationships beyond tattoo removal.

- *Assist Program Administration*

A program supervisor will be required during the transition from two (2) to three (3) clinics. It is still possible for Inter-Agency Committee members to provide necessary administrative support with two clinics. The Inter-Agency Committee intends the Skindeep Program to become a permanent program available to Fairfax County residents. This proposed program supervisor would report directly to the Inter-Agency Committee.

- *Encourage innovative funding sources through grants, donations, and service in-kind*

Self-sustained funding at minimal public expenditure is a primary program goal. Opportunity exists to expand new avenues of sustaining the business of human services. Establishment of adequate funding resources will ensure continuation of this worthy effort.

- *Dedicate funding from all sources to program continuity, perhaps through 501 (C) 3*

The Human Services Leadership Team has been generous to allow the Skindeep Tattoo Removal Program Inter-Agency Committee to develop independent of external direction. The demonstrated success of this innovative program implementation is a tribute to that trust. Skindeep is tightly bound within the essential structure of Fairfax County human services. Program direction is a consensus of highly skilled, dedicated Fairfax County human service professionals. Effectiveness would be enhanced with continuity of this quasi-independent administrative structure.